READING STRATEGIES IN READING ACADEMIC MATERIALS AMONG FORM ONE SCIENCE TEACHERS IN THE GRIK DISTRICT OF PERAK

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THIS ACADEMIC EXERCISE IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF EDUCATION

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the writing in this thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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In the name of Allah, the most merciful and most compassionate.

May benediction and salutation be upon Prophet Muhammad, the Last Apostle.

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Abstrak

Kajian yang dijalankan adalah untuk mencari maklumat yang berkaitan dengan keraguan orang ramai terhadap langkah kerajaan menggunakan Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa pengantar dalam pelajaran Matematik dan Sains. Di antara yang menimbulkan keraguan ini ada dari segi kemampuan guru-guru Matematik dan Bahasa Inggeris untuk memahami kandungan mata pelajaran tersebut memandangkan mereka adalah diajar atau dilatih dalam mata pelajaran tersebut dalam Bahasa Malaysia.

Untuk mencari sedikit petunjuk terhadap keraguan ini, satu kaji selidik telah direkabentuk. Fokus utama kaji selidik ini adalah untuk mengetahui samada guru-guru ini adalah pengguna strateji pembacaan yang kerap di dalam pembacaan mereka dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Jika mereka kerap menggunakan strateji pembacaan, ini menunjukkan bahawa mereka adalah juga merupakan pembaca yang cekap. Andaian ini adalah berdasarkan dapatan kajian terkini yang mengaitkan pembaca yang baik dan cekap dengan pembaca yang menggunakan pelbagai strateji pembacaan.

Sampel populasi kaji selidik adalah terdiri daripada guru-guru Sains Tingkatan Satu dari 12 buah sekolah menengah dalam daerah Grik. Mereka dikehendaki menjawab satu set soalan kaji selidik yang berkaitan dengan penggunaan strateji pembacaan yang mereka gunakan. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah 'Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory'

Berdasarkan skor daripada jawapan mereka dalam soalan kaji selidik, mereka akan dikategorikan kepada tiga kumpulan: pengguna strateji pembacaan yang kerap, biasa dan rendah.

Hasil kajian mendapati secara keseluruhannya subjek-subjek ini adalah terdiri daripada pengguna yang kerap dan sederhana. Kajian juga mendapati tidak terdapat sebarang perbezaan yang signifikan di antara pembolehubah-pemboleubah yang di kaji, iaitu jantina, kelayakan akademik dan sistem sekolah yang berbeza. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan guru-guru yang terlibat tidak mempunyai masalah yang besar untuk memahami bahan bacaan dalam Bahasa Inggeris.

Abstract

This research was carried out in response to the public doubt on the success of adopting English Language as the medium of instruction in teaching Science and Mathematics subjects. Among the argument made by those who are sceptical about the conversion of language, which are taking place in Science and Mathematics classes in schools is the capability of the teachers involved. Since they were not trained in the English medium, would they be able to absorb the new syllabus?

To give light to the vagueness of the situation, a simple survey research was designed. The main focus in the research was to find whether these teachers are frequent users of reading strategies. If they are, this would indicate that they are also good readers. This assumption is based on current researches that indicate good readers employ a wide range of reading strategies.

The sample population of the research was the Form One Science teachers from twelve secondary schools in Grik district. They were asked to respond to a set of questionnaire, which enquired on their use of reading strategies. The instrument used was the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory, designed by Dr. Kouider Mokhtari and Dr. Carla Reichard.

Based on the scores of the questionnaire, the subjects were categorised into three groups: the high, average and low users of reading strategies.
It was found that overall the subjects belong to only two groups of reading strategies users: the high and average, with the high users signify proportion of reading strategies users. It was also found that there was no significant difference among the subjects in reading strategies with regard to gender, academic qualification and different school systems. In the light of these findings, it is suggested that the teachers of Science for Form in Grik district would find no difficulties in understanding the English reading materials.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0   Introduction

Reading is generally accepted as an important receptive skill in promoting language acquisition, especially for second language learners, where the other source of input is scarce (Stephen, 1986). In Malaysia, reading is accepted as the most important skill to be acquired in learning English language (Abraham, 1987). This can be seen in the contents of textbooks used, and in the format of major public examinations. Reading is also the main focus in the Malaysian University English Language Test (MUET), which is compulsory for matriculation, diploma and pre-university programmes. The weightage is 45% or 135 out of an aggregate of 300 (MUET Reference Book 2002). The focus given to reading is in line with its importance in gaining knowledge from a variety of sources in higher education studies. As for teachers, reading is compulsory in their careers. No matter whether they are content-based teachers or language/ art teachers. It is perhaps harder for the Science and Mathematics teachers who are teaching Form One, now that they have to use English language in class and in getting information. Before the implementation of English as the medium, and even till now, there are many from the public who have voiced out their concern over this matter. Among the criticisms, are that the teachers are not ready and will fail in this strenuous task.

1.1   Need for the Study

The implementation of English as the medium of instruction in Mathematics and Science classes is a major drastic step taken by the Ministry of Education. Several support systems have been designed to facilitate the relevant teachers in improving their competency in the language. Among them are short courses, in which the Mathematics and Science teachers are trained to access information. To do this, they have to read. Good readers, as indicated by latest findings in research, apply many strategies. Benedetto (1984) and Sariq (1987) have suggested that reading strategies play important roles in comprehending text.

Reading strategies have become an important focus of research in the field of reading, in particular, the reading behaviour of proficient readers. Proficient readers use a wide variety of strategies such as predicting, asking questions, and thinking about background knowledge. They use these strategies in a skillful manner, depending on the reading task, the readers knowledge about the content of the text and the type of text they are reading (Barnett, 1989).

In short, reading strategies used by readers enable them to be more efficient and effective in reading and enable them to be proficient readers. Poor readers on the other hand are less strategic in using cues contained in reading materials and are often unaware of the strategies they apply in reading (Jensen, 1986)

The information on the strategies that are applied by Form One Science teachers in their reading of academic texts in English, can give better understanding of their nature as readers.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The importance of English in pursuing the latest findings in the field of education has been acknowledged by our government. A major step has been taken in ensuring our students are able to access all the information available around them. The bold step is seen in the implementing the policy of adopting English Language as the medium of instruction in Science and Mathematics subjects throughout Malaysia, starting with Standard One and Form One students in the year 2003.

Hence, the teachers of Mathematics and Science need to develop their English language proficiency to access the abundance of information on the subject area, available in English. Since the teachers are not English Language teachers nor they were trained using English medium in their course, their ability to cope with the task is questionable.

Acknowledging the difficulties that will be faced by the Science and Mathematics teachers with the sudden transformation, the Ministry of Education has taken several strategies to overcome them. One of them is through the English Language Teaching Centre, Malaysia (ELTC), which has been asked to assist the teachers. ELTC has then developed the English for Teaching Mathematics and Science (EteMS) programme. One of the areas in focus in this program is Language for Accessing Information (ELTC, BPG, 2003). Nevertheless, all these support programs require them to read in English. It seems that the crucial factor to determine their success lies within themselves, their ability to read. In view of the promising findings obtained by previous studies on reading, regarding the effectiveness of using reading strategies to enhance reading comprehension, the present study intended to find out the use of reading strategies among the Form One Science teachers in Grik district.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the reading strategies employed by Form One Science teachers from all the secondary schools in the district of Grik. There are altogether fourteen secondary schools in this district. Two of them are MARA boarding schools and the rest are daily schools.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Both the Form One Science teachers and the Form One students of 2003 are the first batch introduced to this new medium of instruction. The students need to be aided in ensuring that they get the information needed in their textbook; whereas, the teachers must be able to extract information from their various sources of reading. The findings of this study are therefore expected to provide a better understanding of the teachers' reading strategies in comprehending texts. This study will also act as an assessor to the needs of Form One Science teachers with respect to their reading. Besides that, this study hoped to establish the baseline against future comparison to be made. This hopefully will in return help the students to get the maximum input during the teaching and learning process in class.

1.5 Research Questions

In relation to the purpose of the study as mentioned earlier, the following research questions were developed:

1. How often do the science teachers use reading strategies when reading academic materials?

2. What group of reading strategies do they usually use?

3. Are there any significant differences in the group of reading strategies used among the teachers with regard to:

i. different gender?

ii. types of schools?

iii. academic qualification?

1.6 Hypotheses

To answer the research question, the following null (Ho) and alternatives (Ha) hypotheses were formulated for the study:

(Ho1) There is no statistically significant relationship between the use of reading strategies among Form One Science teachers from different gender groups.

(Ha1) There is a statistically significant relationship between the use of reading strategies among Form One Science teachers from different gender groups.

(Ho2) There is no statistically significant relationship between the use of reading strategies among Form One Science teachers from different types of school systems (daily schools and boarding schools).

(Ha2) There is a statistically significant relationship between the use of reading strategies among Form One Science teachers from different types of school systems (daily schools and boarding schools).

(Ho3)   There is no statistically significant relationship between the use of reading strategies among Form One Science teachers from different academic qualifications.

(Ha3)   There is a statistically significant relationship between the use of reading strategies among Form One Science teachers from different academic qualifications.